# PERRY COUNTY TOUR

OF

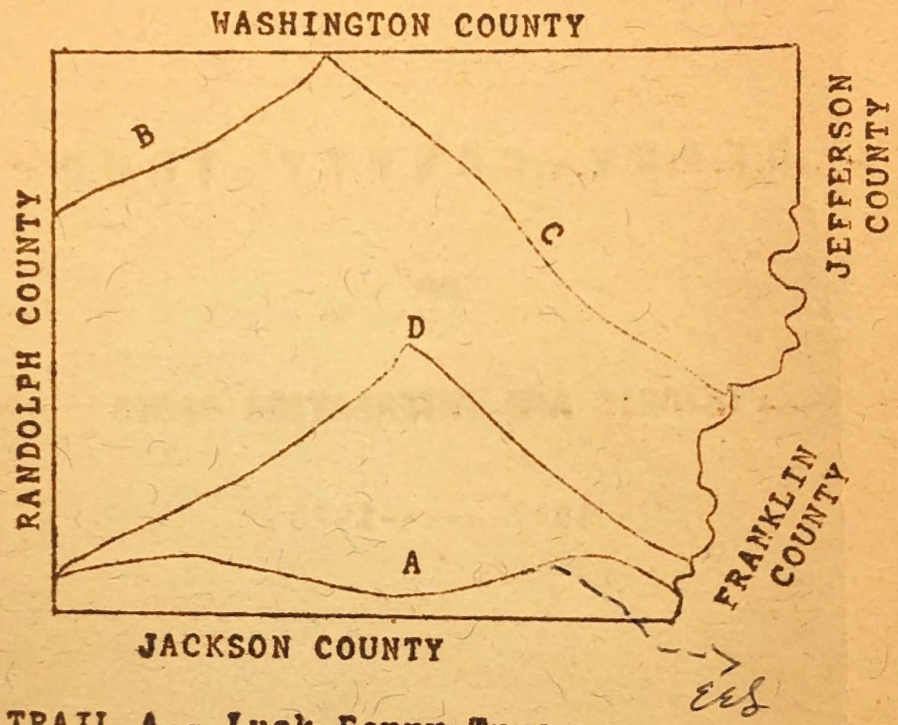
HISTORIC AND INTERESTING SPOTS

1827 -----1976

OFFICIAL TOURMASTER, CLARENCE McCRARY, CHR.

PERRY COUNTY BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

EARLY TRAILS THROUGH PERRY COUNTY




TRAIL A - Lusk Ferry Trace.

TRAIL B - George Rogers Clark 1779

TRAIL C - St. Louis - Shawneetown

TRAIL D - Mail Route Ca 1812

## IN TRIBUTE

This tour is dedicated to the pioneer men and women who endowed us with the comfort and beauty of what is now Perry County. The study of their lives and accomplishments is a study of our heritage. During this Bicentennial Era, we hope to record some of what is almost forgotten and pay tribute anew to the courage and industry of our forefathers.

## AREA NOTES

Compiled from histories, legend, lore and "remembering."

### EARLY CEMETERIES

Scattered about the county are more than 100 known burial grounds, many of them small family plots no longer tended. Some still accessible offer interesting studies of pioneer families. Included are ... Old DuQuoin, Galum Presbyterian, Hopewell, McElvain and Nine-Mile Prairie Baptist Church Cemetery. Believed to be the oldest is the cemetery adjoining the original site of the Hopewell Presbyterian Church. The church is no longer in existence but the cemetery is well maintained and in current use. The markers tell the story of several generations in a number of families. The giant White Oak that sits atop its knoll, is known as the Hopewell Oak and is widely known in state forestry circles.

### TOLL BRIDGE

Probably one of the first aids-to-transportation in Perry County was the Toll Bridge built and operated by Mr. Jarrod Jackson around 1811. It permitted the settlers to cross the Little Muddy River into Perry County along the area that is now called Old DuQuoin. Nearby, and to the north a bit, is the site of the first institution of higher learning in this area. It was called The Seminary and stood atop Old DuQuoin Hill.

## HERITAGE HOMES

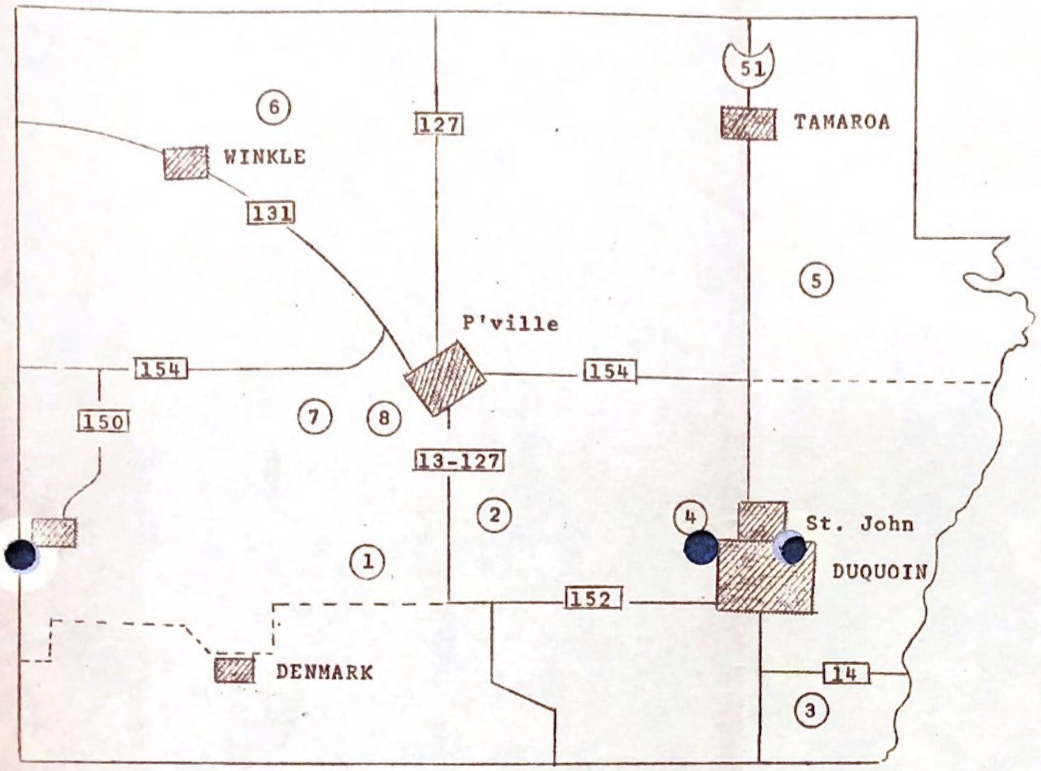
One of the loveliest and most historic homes in Perry County is the old B. G. Root home, located along the Illinois Central Gulf Railway, just south of Tamaroa. Now owned by Mr. & Mrs. Calvin Ibendahl, it is a showplace of careful restoration. Representing a distinguished early American family, the Roots came to this area in the early 1800's. He entered the land where the home sets, in 1838-39. Also of rewarding interest is the well preserved Root one-room schoolhouse, moved from its original site to the spacious lawn of the Ibendahl setting. Historic items are being added to the schoolroom collection continuously.

Old Swanwick Mansion, just north of present day Winkle, has not fared so well. Thomas Swanwick, of the Swanwicks of ..... Chester, England, arrived in Grand Cote Prairie in 1818, the year Illinois became a state. His family followed the next year and he built them a stately and elegant home which soon became known as the Swanwick Mansion. The family cemetery still exists but the once beautiful mansion is now a ghostly ruin. It has been abandoned for too many years.

## RAILROAD

In 1854, the mainline of MidAmerica laced the center of Perry County, streaking down its middle from north to south. It was the mainline of the Illinois Central Railway, long a good friend to those it touched. Later a branch line, the St. Louis division, cut through from Pinckneyville to connect Pyatt, Matthews, Vergennes and Murphysboro to the mainline at the Carbondale division.

EARLY PRAIRIES IN PERRY COUNTY




PERRY COUNTY

POINTS OF INTEREST

LEGEND

N

County Road

Highways

Cities & Towns

POINTS OF INTEREST

(1) Pyramid State Park, about 1,500 acres of 40-year regrowth over strip hills of old Pyramid Coal Co. mine. Near here is site of first Perry County settler, John Flack, 1799. His son was first baby born in the county.

(2) Ozburn Hill Area: Thomas Cox settled here, probably pre-1799. Atop hill (highest point in county) was Hawkins Ozburn farm. He was an early legislator and widely known horse breeder and fancier. His grave in McElvain cemetery bears oldest county marker, 1822.

(3) Old DuQuoin Area: Cemetery, site of Seminary and Jackson's Ferry and Toll Bridge.

(4) St. John Salt Works: West of railroad crossing at St. John.

(5) The Roots home and school house (Ibendahl farm).

(6) Swanwick Mansion and family cemetery.

(7) Hopewell Cemetery and historic Hopewell oak (early 1830's).

(8) Tree studded Perry County fairgrounds (in Pinckneyville) site of oldest continuous county fair in Illinois. Also permanent display of early steam engines by the American Thresherman Association.

## EARLY INDUSTRY

Probably one of the first industries was the old Salt Mine located just north of Du Quoin. Another successful business was the Blakeslee Pump Company, founded in 1862. The first national company in Perry County, it was founded by H. F. and A. J. Blakeslee, employed thirty-five full time workers and sent pumps all over the world.

## PRAIRIES

"As close as man will ever come to Paradise on this earth" is the manner in which one settler described the view across what is now known as "Paradise Prairie" in Perry County.

Tradition relates that Geo. Rogers Clark and his men spent most of an entire day trying to find their way out of what is known as "Lost Prairie." No

Grand Cote (Beautiful Prairie) is the descriptive name given an area which includes the north-western area of the county.

Six Mile Prairie, including the Cutler-Jamestown area, and extending for miles northwest into Randolph County was the traditional scene of a terrible battle between the Shawnee and Tamarois tribes. Tradition tells us the Tamarois were practically eliminated. Writing in 1859, one author tells us "the bones of the dead are still visible to this day on the prairie."

When settlers first entered the area, they found it blanketed with dense woodlands, with the exception of scattered areas of prairie. These prairies made a convenient reference point in an otherwise wilderness area. Thus we find references in early records of the "west edge of Four Mile Prairie," and "between Four Mile and Lower Holt's Prairie." The prairies were an important feature on the early landscape.

Many of the prairies extended for miles, presenting the viewer with an illusion of a vast waving sea of green stretching off to the horizon. Men often became lost in these unmarked grasslands where the growth was often 12 or 15 feet in height. The dense grass provided protective cover for teeming wildlife.....deer, quail, prairie chicken, passenger pigeon, etc. The Indian population used the areas as hunting grounds, and fought bitter wars to protect their interest in a particularly productive grassland.

The earliest settlers did not farm to any great extent, preferring instead to live by trapping and hunting, while gardening just enough to feed the family. The wave of settlers which entered following the War of 1812 contained the true farmers.

White settlers found the prairie sod rich & deep from the accumulation of centuries of decayed vegetation. After designing a plow capable of cutting through the dense root system they discovered it much easier to till the prairie than to clear away the woodlands to gain farm lands. Usually the settler built his cabin on the edge of the prairie, where there was timber for cabin material and heating fires, then he farmed the prairie near his home.

The verdant prairies are gone today, with only the names remaining to remind us of the primitive beauty which once was. Indeed, such growth is almost beyone our imagination. Many of the plants which made up the grassland still grow, in the area, but they are meek, insignificant specimen of the plants of early 1800 and before. Our railroad and highway right-of-way still support goldenrod, ragweed, cattail, foxtail, poke berry, and others.

## EARLY TRAILS AND ROADWAYS

When the white man came to Perry County, he found the Indians traveling over a network of pathways which were nothing more than foot trails. These trails were extensive because the Indian carried on a basic commerce throughout the area.

As settlements were enlarged, the white settlers used some of the Indian trails for his own travel from settlement to settlement. As use broadened and marked the trail more plainly, it was designated a "trace."

When civilization finally came to the area, many of the traces were upgraded, clearly marked on maps, and designated "roads." These roads were almost impassable in rainy weather, and were equally unpleasant in dry dusty seasons. Early roadways were designated for postal routes depending upon the width - horse and rider, one buggy, or two buggies.

In our area, most early postal routes radiated out from Frank's Fort located in what is now Frankfort Heights at the east edge of West Frankfort, Illinois.

My note...Perry Co. formed from Randolph County and the northern township of Jackson Co. (1827) EES

## PERRY COUNTY

Created January 29, 1827 by the Illinois Legislature, Perry County was named in honor of Oliver Hazard Perry, Commodore, United States Navy who won distinction as commander of the fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie, in 1813. The Perry County land area was first a portion of St. Clair County. Later it became part of Randolph. Pinckneyville is its county seat. DuQuoin is its largest town. Tamaroa is its oldest settlement dating back to 1815.

(Source: Counties of Illinois, compiled and published by Secretary of State).

This brochure was researched and prepared by a special countywide Bicentennial Committee assembled by Charlotte Coffer, Extension Adviser, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Serv., Perry County Cooperating. Copies and additional tour information may be obtained from the .... Cooperative Extension Service Office at 113 East South Street Post Office Box 347 in Pinckneyville or through Perry County Bicentennial Committee. The sites on the tour were chosen because of accessibility and uniqueness.

MY COMMENTS.....

p/1 EARLY TRAILS THROUGH PERRY COUNTY.

Trail "B" was recorded early as the Kaskaskia to Vincennes Trace. This is the route George Rogers Clark and his men took to Vincennes from Kaskaskia in February of 1779. (See Surveyor's Record in Perry Co. Clerk's Office - 1835)

p/2 EARLY CEMETERIES.

I can find no proof that Hopewell is the oldest cemetery in Perry County, although it does date back to the early times in our history.

Following are some of the earliest marked graves found here to date and places in which they were found.

1. SKINNER, Ephriam d. 3 Oct 1820. There is a memorial stone in Old DuQuoin Cemetery (sec 27, T6S, R1W). From early writings it is believed that his body is in the Old Campbell Cemetery (sec 34, T6S, R1W) on the Lusk's Ferry to Kaskaskia Trail which runs past this place. The ground has never been disturbed where the present stone was placed in Old DuQuoin. (Divining rods used by M.E. Spurgeon 8 Oct 1975. See also booklet of E.Spurgeon "Oldest Marked Grave".)

2. McELVAIN, Ephriam B. d. 5 Jan 1822 aged 5 mos. A stone marks his grave in the McElvain Cemetery sec 14,T6S, R2W. He is buried near his grandfather, Lewis Wells, a Revolutionary soldier.

3. GREEN/E, Infant son of Levi and Elizabeth Greene, d. 7 Sep 1827. Stone marking this grave in the Levi Greene Burying Ground a/k/a Sprague at Jamestown in sec 34, T5S, R4W. He was the grandson of the Rev. Eli Short, a noted Baptist preacher in the early history of both Perry and Randolph Counties.

4. TAYLOR, Robert Evleigh, a physician from England who came here early as a friend of the Swanwicks. He d. 12 Sep 1827 and the Swanwicks erected a very impressive stone at his grave in the Swanwick Family Cemetery in sec 11, T4S, R4W. This stone is not impressive artistically or in it's size, but in the verse telling of his life and labors. It will soon be lost. (See cemetery book by Eliz^b. Spurgeon for inscription etc.)

5. SWANWICK, Thomas, d. 24 July 1829. His was the first will probated in Perry county. Buried near Robert E. Taylor above in the family cemetery.

p/3 HERITAGE HOMES.

The following stories do not agree exactly with that regarding the SWANWICK MANSION...in part....

"In 1817 Thomas Swanwick came to the Illinois prairie where he built a log cabin in preparation for the coming of his family the following year. His wife, Hannah, followed in 1818 with ten of their eleven

children. Sarah, my grandmother was the youngest, being only four years of age...Two maids also accompanied the family.

When they finally reached the prairie, the cabin was finished with the exception of doors, where blankets were hung ...later the log cabin burned and a 12 room, brick, house was built on the same location."

This story was written by Mrs. Anna Morrison Gale, great grandaughter of Thos. and Hannah Swanwick, for the Randolph Co. Herald Tribune of Chester, Ill. in 1955. She was writing from memory the stories handed down to her by older members of the family.

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Miss Myra Morrison, another great grdaughter of Thos. and Hannah Swanwick, wrote for the Sparta News-Plaindealer of Sparta, Ill., Thursday, 29 May 1958 ..."Thomas Swanwick came from England in 1817 and built a cabin in the prairie near where the brick home stands now... Later the cabin burned down and the brick mansion was built about 1847".

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J. J. Swanwick, son of Thos. and Hannah, became owner of the property after the death of his mother in 1838, so he was the one who built the mansion...not his father.

I have heard that natives of the Swanwick area said the first home was to the west of the brick. (No proof of this) It had to be quite a large cabin to contain all of the possessions listed in the inventory in the estate of Hannah Swanwick in 1838, not to mention such a large family and other persons connected in some manner with the family.

p/4 PRAIRIES.

Can find no proof that George Rogers Clark and his men spent most of an entire day trying to find their way out of what is known as "Lost Prairie". He and his men did take the Kaskaskia to Vincennes Trail in Feb. of 1779 but there is no record of their being lost on this particular trek.

When he and his men traveled from Ft. Massac on the Ohio to Kaskaskia in Jul. 1778 they did become lost for almost a day near what later became Bainbridge in Williamson Co.,Il. This was on Phelps Prairie.(See Outdoor Illinois July 1968-Vol VIL #5)

McDonnough's Hist. of Randolph,Monroe and Perry Cos.,Il. 1883 gives this account on p/446 re the Cutler Precinct...."....and the lower edge of Lost Prairie has its terminus in the northern part. It received the name of Lost Prairie at a very early day in the history of the county. The occasion of giving it that name, grew out of the circumstances of a party of several men getting lost on their way from Vincennes to Kaskaskia. The date of its receiving that name is not known,or the circumstances that gave rise to it, other than that above stated."

Some of the prairie grasses grew at least12-15feet in height and it was not unusual that men became lost here. It was said that even a man on horse-back could not be seen.

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Montague writes in 1859 (see p/6) that "It was an Indian tradition that the Tammaria Tribe was nearly exterminated in a battle with the Shawnees, fought on Six Mile Prairie, in Perry County.

The bones of the slain and other evidence of the battle were to be seen there not many years ago."

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In 1883 McDonnough writes this in his history of Beaucoup Twp.,Perry Co.,Il. p/473..."They (The Hutchings) accordingly began their return and when they arrived at their destination, there were encamped within sight of them a large body of Kaskaskia Indians upon what was then their favorite camping grounds, and what is now familiarly known as Hutchings' Prairie. The Hutchings say, that when they came, there were great quantities of elks', antelopes', and deer's, bones scattered upon the prairie; that in Four Mile Prairie, below Pinckneyville, there were many human bones to be found. The presence of these bones they supposed at that time to have been occasioned by a desperate fight between the Kaskaskia and Kickapoo Indians previous to their settlement here, in which a great many braves were killed on both sides in their running fight were left unburied".....

p/7 PERRY COUNTY.

I cannot reconcile the fact that Tamaroa was the oldest settlement in Perry County...dating back to 1815. We know that Cox and Flack were here much earlier and lived south of Pinckneyville.

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POINTS OF INTEREST.

No. 2...OZBURN HILL AREA:

Hawkins Ozburn's burial in the McElvain Cemetery was not the first one there although it is true that that is his burial place. Little Ephriam McElvain who d. 5 Jan 1822 if the first marked grave found here. (Sec. 14, T6S, R2W)

Hawkins S. Ozburn was born 8 Sep. 1808 in Tennessee and died 18 July 1868 in Perry County, Il. (See probate record in Box 339, Office of Circuit Clerk).

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Elizabeth E. Spurgeon

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